

Al-Madinah School

Friar Street, Friar Gate, Derby, DE1 1NU

Inspection dates

1–2 October 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Inadequate	4
Leadership and management		Inadequate	4

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires special measures.

- This school is dysfunctional. The basic systems and processes a school needs to operate well are not in place.
- This is a school which has been set up and run by representatives of the community with limited knowledge and experience. Leadership and management, including governance, are inadequate and have been unable to improve the school.
- The school has not been adequately monitored or supported.
- Pupils' achievement is inadequate because the staff's expectations are too low and pupils do not make enough progress.
- Teaching is inadequate. Many teachers are inexperienced and have not received the training and support they need.
- In many lessons, pupils are given the same work to do regardless of their different abilities.
- Behaviour and safety are inadequate because attendance is low and declining.
- Procedures for ensuring pupils are safe do not meet requirements.
- The governing body is ineffective. Until recently, the governing body had not appreciated how poor pupils' experiences are. The school's finances are not properly managed and the usual safe recruitment processes have not been followed.
- The interim Principal has been at the school for a month and is swiftly setting about addressing the myriad problems the school faces.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils feel happy in this school. Pupils' spiritual and moral development is well supported in and out of school. Islamic Studies contribute well to promoting pupils' understanding of the similarities between different religions. Inspectors saw no evidence during the inspection of boys and girls being treated unequally.
- There is a clear vision for the purpose and place of this school in the community. The school engages well with its parents but has not translated its vision into reality.
- Good relationships exist between pupils and between pupils and staff.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was originally scheduled to take place in late 2013 in accordance with the normal timescale for the inspection of new schools. The inspection was brought forward following complaints and allegations made to Ofsted and the Department of Education about poor leadership and management at the school. Her Majesty's Inspectors made a further visit to the school on 7 October 2013 to gather additional evidence.
- Inspectors observed 12 lessons and checked the school site at break times and lunchtimes on the first day. More lesson observations were planned for the second day of the inspection, but these could not take place as the school was closed to pupils following concerns which the inspection team raised with the interim Principal.
- Meetings were held with the interim Principal, senior leaders and staff and with representatives of the governing body. Inspectors spoke with groups of pupils and parents.
- The work of the school was observed and a range of documentation scrutinised, including the school's planning records, governing body minutes, analysis of pupil performance data and the evaluation of the quality of teaching. Records relating to behaviour, attendance and staff recruitment procedures were also checked.
- The views of 61 parents responding to an online questionnaire (Parent View) were taken into account. Correspondence from a parent and the former Principal of the school were read.

Inspection team

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Her Majesty's Inspector

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Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

Information about this school

- Al-Madinah School is a new free school which opened on 1 September 2012. The school is designated as having a Muslim ethos.
- The school operates under a funding agreement made with the Department of Education.
- The Department of Education carried out a monitoring visit to the school in November 2012.
- The primary and secondary sections of the school are smaller than their average-sized equivalents. Pupils have been admitted into the Early Years Foundation Stage, Years 1 to 3 in the primary school and Years 7 to 9 in the secondary school.
- The school is unable to say how many pupils it has who should be supported through school action or school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- A broadly average proportion of students is eligible for additional government funding (the pupil premium). This is provided to support the learning of pupils who are known to be entitled to free school meals or are in the care of the local authority.
- Almost all pupils are of Pakistani heritage.
- The school has not been established long enough to have a full set of examination results.
- The secondary school does not make use of any alternative provision.
- Inspectors were aware during this inspection of an investigation by the appropriate authorities into allegations of wrong-doing that did not concern child protection or safeguarding arrangements.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure the school is safe for pupils and remains so before re-opening.
- Strengthen leadership and management by:
 - ensuring governance is effective
 - ensuring the services of an interim Principal are secured until a substantive Principal can be appointed
 - arranging for successful primary and secondary schools to support this school by sharing their basic systems, procedures and good practice.
- Develop a curriculum which is broad and balanced and meets the needs of pupils.
- Implement a coherent staffing structure which clearly identifies roles and responsibilities and appropriate accountabilities.
- Identify disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs in the school and ensure they receive the additional support they are entitled to.
- Implement systems for capturing reliable data, monitoring attendance and notifying parents of those children who do not arrive at school as expected.

- Ensure statutory requirements are met and particularly those arising from legislation concerning racism, disability and special educational needs as well as those relating to the appointment of specified posts.
- Raise achievement and improve the quality of teaching by:
 - training teachers to use assessment information to plan lessons with activities of varying difficulty matched to pupils' needs
 - training teachers to assess accurately pupils' standards of work
 - ensuring teachers regularly assess pupils' work and provide written guidance on how they might improve
 - establishing higher expectations of what pupils can achieve and boosting the pace of learning
 - regularly monitoring the quality of teaching and learning and taking effective action to bring about improvement where weaknesses are identified.

Inspectors strongly recommend that the school should not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is inadequate

- Pupils make inadequate progress during the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 in the primary school. Assessments of pupils in the primary school are incomplete and unreliable. What data there is shows pupils' progress to be inconsistent over time. The progress pupils made in all the lessons visited, apart from those for Year 2 pupils, was inadequate.
- In the secondary school, pupils made inadequate progress in the lessons observed. Pupils' written work in several subjects confirmed that they make slow progress over time. Teacher assessments of work against National Curriculum levels are over-generous; they are not a true reflection of the limited progress which pupils actually make. Pupils make inadequate progress overall at Key Stage 3.
- There are few planned opportunities for pupils to apply their literacy skills or understanding of numeracy when working in other subjects. The exception to this is in Islamic Studies, where pupils have good opportunities to develop their literacy.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make inadequate progress because the school has not identified who they are and does not provide work specifically adapted for their needs. They are left to struggle.
- More able pupils do not make sufficient progress because they are given work to do which is pitched at the middle ability level of the class. There are a few exceptions to this; for example in science, where more able pupils can access harder work.
- Additional government funding (including pupil premium funding and the Year 7 catch-up funding) has been loosely allocated to paying for teaching assistants and additional small group sessions held before and after school. The impact of this additional support on achievement has not been evaluated. The school has not decided how to use its additional primary school sports funding.

The quality of teaching

is inadequate

- The school's own monitoring of the quality of teaching shows most to be inadequate or to require improvement. Almost all teaching seen during the inspection, including in the Early Years Foundation Stage, was judged inadequate.
- The best teaching was seen in Year 2. Most teaching in the primary school was characterised by poor lesson planning with all pupils given the same work, regardless of whether they were too easy or too difficult for them. Many of the teachers in the primary school do not understand how to use assessment information to plan work of appropriate challenge. They are unaware of which pupils have special educational needs and the specific kinds of support they need.
- In the secondary school, pupils are generally given the same work regardless of their ability. This lack of precise planning means that pupils are not sufficiently engaged with, or focused on, their learning.

- There are frequent occasions where pupils are insufficiently challenged; for example, in a mathematics lesson pupils spent most of the 55 minutes cutting-out and pasting shapes and learned little that was mathematical.
- Teachers have low expectations. The pace of learning is slow because modestly challenging work leads to modest outcomes. Pupils are not learning enough, quickly enough.
- Some pupils' written work is poorly presented and untidy and the quality of their work is deteriorating over time. Teachers' marking of pupils' work is variable and generally comments praise pupils' efforts rather than correct the content of their work. Teachers do not write enough subject specific guidance to show pupils how they might improve their work. Misspelling of subject-specific vocabulary is left uncorrected.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are inadequate

- Attendance is worryingly low and declining. At the time of the inspection, the attendance of pupils at the secondary school was 89% which is very low. It was broadly average in the primary school at 96.4%. Around half of the secondary pupils have unauthorised absences. This is because the school does not monitor its attendance data and unauthorised absences are not pursued rigorously.
- The overall attendance figure for the last academic year for the primary and secondary schools combined was 92.7%. This places the school in the bottom 10% of all schools nationally. Attendance is recorded manually on paper registers and the school does not have up to date information about the attendance of different groups of pupils. There is no system for notifying parents of any pupils who do not arrive at school as expected.
- Behaviour between lessons in and around the school is closely supervised by staff. It is sometimes a little loud in the secondary school but otherwise the school is an orderly and friendly place. In class, younger pupils work well together in mixed-gender groups much of the time. Older pupils are seated with boys on one side of the class and girls on the other. Due to limited canteen space, boys and girls have their lunches separately, taking it in turns to eat first.
- Year 9 pupils say there are some minor disruptions to lessons. Pupils of all ages speak positively about the good relationships in the school and the lack of bullying. They say pupils sometimes use homophobic terms of abuse to each other but are clear that adults would reprimand them if they were overheard.
- Records of behavioural incidents that occur are patchy and unreliable. The school does not monitor these records. Therefore, the school is unaware of where it needs to target its efforts to bring about improvement. Racist incidents are not recorded and reported, as the school is statutorily obliged to do.

The leadership and management are inadequate

- Failures in leadership and management are at the heart of the school's dysfunctional situation. There is no coherent staffing structure.
- Staff have been appointed to key roles for which they do not have the qualifications and experience. For example, most of the primary school teachers have not taught before and the head of the primary school is experienced in teaching secondary-aged pupils only. They work hard and are keen to do well by their pupils but they have not had the training and support they need to do so.

- The special educational needs coordinator is a qualified teacher, as regulations require, but has not yet undertaken the necessary training he has asked to attend. He does not have enough time to be able to carry out his duties properly. The individual education plans, which set out the support these pupils are entitled to, are either missing or not fit for purpose.
- Many statutory and other requirements are not met. For example, the school operated without a designated Principal for several weeks last summer. There are some policies in place but they are not necessarily followed.
- Important data the school is expected to hold is incomplete or unreliable. This is because the staff managing this data have sometimes been left without computers but also because there has been insufficient oversight and direction by managers.
- Safeguarding requirements are not met. The interim Principal rightly decided to close the school to pupils during the inspection once inspectors had alerted him to failings in the school's processes.
- Senior leaders are aware that there is little good or better teaching. They recognise that large numbers of unqualified staff desperately need better support and training. Arrangements for the training and professional development of staff are woefully insufficient and uncoordinated.
- Arrangements for performance management were put in place but not applied. It is unclear why staff carrying out comparable roles are paid at different rates. A few staff in promoted posts did their best to provide effective leadership during the period last summer, when the school had no Principal.
- The curriculum does not match the needs of the pupils particularly because what is planned does not build on what pupils have learned previously. There is no promotion of literacy and numeracy and ineffective monitoring of programmes of study. Subject teachers plan work for their classes independently and, therefore, the curriculum is uncoordinated. The required independent careers guidance for secondary-age pupils is not provided.
- The core curriculum, particularly English and mathematics, is delivered through an extended school day and academic year.
- The National Curriculum is followed with distinct Religious Education lessons provided, in addition to Islamic Studies. Religious Education lessons follow a locally agreed syllabus which enables pupils to learn about the six major world religions, helping pupils understand how people of different faiths can live together. For example, some pupils from this school have visited a nearby Catholic school where they talked about their respective faiths and asked questions of each other. One girl told inspectors that 'we learnt that lots of things are the same about our two religions'. Pupils from this school presented the pupils from the Catholic school with a copy of the Qur'an and received a set of rosary beads in return.
- The school engages well with parents by, for example, involving them in promoting high career aspirations for girls as well as for boys. Mothers are encouraged to take an active role in the school.
- The budget for last year has not been reconciled and the school is working from an indicative budget. It does not know whether it is carrying forward a surplus or a deficit. Because the school has not sufficiently resourced its library, some teachers bring in their own reading books for pupils.

- The interim Principal has a verbal agreement with the governing body to lead the school until December 2013. He knows what to do to put the school right but his current temporary status means leadership and management are in a precarious position. The interim Principal is striving, in difficult circumstances, to keep the school going. The governors have not advertised for a substantive Principal.

■ **The governance of the school:**

Governors have failed to ensure children are safe in the school. They have also failed to appoint staff with appropriate skills, knowledge and experience and to adequately monitor the work of the school properly. As a result, governors have not been able to hold the school sufficiently to account. The school is in chaos and reliant on the goodwill of an interim Principal to prevent it totally collapsing. Accounting systems are not in place to ensure public money is properly spent and governors have failed to ensure an acceptable standard of education is provided by the school. Despite their commitment to the vision for the school, the governors have failed the parents of this community who have placed their trust in them.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	138776
Local authority	Derby
Inspection number	424948

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	All-through
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	4–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	412
Appropriate authority	The proprietor
Chair	Shazia Parveen
Principal	Stuart Wilson
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01332 720136
Fax number	Not available
Email address	enquiries@almadinahschool.co.uk

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